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Charity, Philanthropy and Development in Colombo, Sri LankaFilippo Osella, Roderick Stirrat and Tom Widger¹**Introduction**

Anthropologists take an ethnographic approach to understanding everyday experience, including practices of giving and receiving. There is an established anthropological tradition of interest in ‘the gift’ and how this relates to a wider understanding of the politics of exchange, both material and intangible. ‘Charity’ or ‘philanthropy’ can be viewed, in time honoured Maussian tradition, as particular modalities of the gift, and in this chapter we aim to explore how anthropological understandings of the everyday politics of exchange can help us comprehend philanthropic activities, and, at the same time, how an analysis of philanthropy and charity can illuminate an anthropological understanding of exchange.

There is increasing interest in the role that philanthropy plays in the process of development, especially given the pressures on international donors and the changing architecture of international aid. The apparent rolling back of the state and rolling out of the market - engendered by global structural adjustments associated with the neo-liberal consensus of the last 30 years - have projected charity and philanthropy as a viable alternative to state provisions in the global south as well as in the north. Whilst much research has been concerned with the activities of major philanthropic or charitable institutions, relatively little has been written about what might be called ‘indigenous’ charity - the activities and impact of charities and philanthropic individuals outside the western world (see eg. Copeman 2009; Latief 2010; Bornstein 2012; Atia 2013).

This chapter has three broad objectives: firstly, to map the ‘philanthroscape’ of Colombo; secondly, to understand how this ‘philanthroscape’ has changed in the post-colonial period; and thirdly, to consider the developmental nature of philanthropic/charitable activity with

¹ This chapter is based on an ESRC/DfID-funded research project concerned with charity, philanthropy and development in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This two-years project involved researchers from the Department of Anthropology at Sussex University and from the Centre for Poverty Analysis in Colombo.

regard to how it can support both civil society and the state to set or achieve their development agenda.

We see Sri Lanka as a suitable venue for exploring contemporary forms of giving - and the relationships between givers and receivers - for a number of reasons. According to the World Giving Index, the population of Sri Lanka is the 8th most generous in the world with regards to charitable giving and the most generous developing nation (Charities Aid Foundation 2010). The country has experienced a huge flux of international philanthropy after the 2004 tsunami, whilst more recently, and somewhat controversially, global charities have contributed to the rehabilitation process following the end of the civil war. Whilst these events have changed the *texture* of local forms of giving, Sri Lanka has long been exposed to international charitable efforts in the form of developmental assistance, in part as a legacy of the colonial period. At the same time, globalization and economic liberalization have seen the emergence of a dynamic business and manufacturing sector that is beginning to engage with corporate social responsibility projects, in addition to older interests in corporate philanthropy stretching back also to the colonial period. Finally, there is a large Sri Lankan diaspora – in Europe, North America and the Gulf countries of the Middle East, for instance - which supports charitable activities at ‘home.’

Colombo, is especially suited to this study because of its heterogeneous population. According to the 2012 census, the population of the Colombo Divisional Secretariat area is 40.7% Muslim, 33.4% Tamil, and 25% Sinhala. This translates into a religious composition of: 42% Islam, 22.3% Hindu, 19.1% Buddhist, and 16.5% Christian². Extensive comparative literature from Europe and North America indicates that religion is a major factor in determining the scale, meaning and style of charitable activities. The presence of four global religions in one urban milieu provides a manageable context within which to understand the relationship between religious identities and charity; the circulation of practices between religious groups; and the relationship between religious and non-religious organisations. The range of income and wealth differentials in Colombo allows us also to investigate the link between wealth and charity - comparative evidence demonstrates that, as a proportion of their

² This is an almost complete reversal of the wider Colombo District and national demographic where Sinhala are the majority ethnic group and Tamil and Muslim are the minority, and Buddhism is the majority religion and Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity are minority religions. Thus for many people in Sri Lanka Colombo is regarded as a Muslim city.

income, the poor tend to give as much as the rich. Finally, contemporary Colombo has a mix of charitable organisations, some dating back to the colonial period and still focused on the philanthropic values of that era, particularly educational and health charities. At the same time, there are newer institutions concerned with various forms of community-based development interventions that have developed in post-Independence Sri Lanka and display novel approaches to philanthropy and charity. The interplay between the local and the global is particularly evident in Colombo where both national and international charitable organisations are headquartered there (e.g. CARE, Plan, Oxfam, Red Cross, World Vision, South Asia Partnership).

This chapter considers two surveys of the Colombo philanthroscape: household gifting practices, and gifting by private and public sector organisations. A small survey was also conducted of charities in order to gauge the extent to which funds are collected from within Sri Lanka, rather than from foreign donors. The household survey was conducted using a *cluster sampling* method and achieved a representative breakdown by ethnicity and religion, two of our key variables. In total, 747 households were interviewed. The organisational surveys were conducted using a *snowball technique*, and included 261 businesses, 39 public sector entities, and 54 charities. Qualitative data was collected through formal and semi-formal interviews of donors and recipients of charity across communities defined by different ethnic/religious affiliation, as well as a number of case studies of specific charitable/philanthropic interventions and projects.

The politics of philanthropy in Sri Lanka

Literature on charity in Sri Lanka is sparse - but there have been two surveys (Dutta, 2000; APPC, 2007) and a study of volunteering (IPID 2001). However, those studies were conducted using small samples, and theoretical issues were not addressed. There is also a considerable literature on the role of NGOs in Sri Lanka (see eg Woost 1997; Goodhand 1999; Stirrat 2006) but these generally focus on issues of efficacy rather than on the charitable and philanthropic aspects of those organisations. More useful perhaps is historical literature, which relates the changing patterns of charity to politico-economic change (Jayawardena, 2000; Seneviratne, 1999). This indicates the emergence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of novel forms of charity intervention, mostly based in Colombo and

supported by an emerging local bourgeoisie of wealthy traders, planters and liquor contractors. As in the rest of colonial South Asia, modern philanthropy did not replace existing practices of religious giving, but by the early 20th century the two began to coexist. For example, many rich Muslim traders - who made substantial donations to enable the construction in 1892 of the first *modern* Muslim College in Colombo, Zahira College - also set up *awqaf* (religious trusts) which ran mosques and madrasas and supported the performance of religious rituals. After independence, properties continued to be endowed as religious trusts, with the purpose of supporting religious activities but also with the aim of securing a steady income to the donors' descendants and, in the case of wealthy planters and landowners, to maintain the allegiance of rural clients and labourers.

In contemporary Colombo most people of all religious groups and classes (90% of the respondents in our survey) were engaged in charitable acts. Most donations of cash and in kind – primarily food – were small but regular, taking the form of gifts to beggars, and poor neighbours and relatives. Larger, but more irregular donations, were also given to religious causes – temples, churches, and mosques – or to institutions catering for the poor and needy, for example, orphanages, elders' homes, and the national cancer hospital. Levels of volunteerism are lower (50% of participants in the survey), but nevertheless represented a high level of participation in charitable activities. Mention should also be made of *membership* of charitable societies, through which, for example, volunteers assist in management of churches, temples and mosques, or assist in the distribution of material assistance provided by these institutions (such as?). In addition, people volunteer for organisations such as the Sri Lankan Red Cross, the Rotary, and local groups such as Sarvodaya and Lankaseva.

Although a general commitment to humanity and a desire to help others motivates donors, our data indicates that the primary purpose underlying much charitable activity is religiously defined. Thus, for Buddhists, *daane* (the giving of alms to monks) is connected to the pan-South Asian practice of religious gifting, and reflects what it means to be a 'good' Buddhist. Both rich and poor support monks and monastic institutions. But for some Buddhists the concept of *daane* has been extended to other forms of giving, for example of food to the poor, grants to poor children for their education, and food to orphanages and elders' homes,

especially to commemorate death anniversaries and birthdays. Similarly, charity is seen as an important activity by all Christian religious groups both in terms of gifts to support church organisations, and donations of food, material assistance and educational help for the poor. For Muslims, of various sectarian or organisational affiliations, charity is also a central aspect of religious orthopraxy. Whilst the annual giving of *zakat* is an obligation for those who hold wealth or assets above a certain amount, *sadaqa* is a form of meritorious giving practised by every Muslim. Christians, Muslims and Buddhists talk in terms of the religious ‘merit’ which accrues in the present or the afterlife from charitable acts. The conceptualisation, and the perceived results, of this ‘economy of merits’ is different from one tradition to another. But a similarity is that this kind of charitable giving seems to be more about the *giver* than the recipient.

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For all religious traditions the act of giving and the intention of the giver is most important, while the scale of the donation might be less significant. *Sadaqa*, for instance, can entail something as substantial as donation of money to build a hospital, or as insignificant as removing a stone from a footpath. In theory, what matters are the intentions of those who perform the action. But, of course, in practice size does matter, and large donors use their charity as a means of making statements about their status. Although this is perhaps less common today than in the past when the colonial administration provided an avenue for the public recognition of donors’ munificence by conferring honours and titles, and large public donations were the ground for assertion of political and religious leadership within ethnic/religious communities. In the past rich Catholic benefactors, for example, were keen that their names appear on the church buildings, orphanages and schools they supported. However, today charity appears to be less ostentatious. Similarly there is an ongoing debate, which reflects the growing concern of Muslims about the need for anonymous giving. Many respondents of our survey argued that ‘the right hand should not know what the left does’.³ Some donations are more *public* than others; anyway anonymity is difficult because giving remains a highly socially-embedded activity. People continue to personally give *zakat* and *sadaqa* to those with whom they have long-term relationships, and the work of foundations or projects of corporate social responsibility is strongly connected to the identification of the

³ Although most respondents explained this by citing from the New Testament, “the left hand doesn’t not know what the right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3), they referred to the following passage from the Qur’an: “If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you; and this will do away with some of your evil deeds; and Allah is aware of what you do” (Al-Qur’an 2:271).

givers. This also relates to the question of whether charity should be a matter of individual choice or whether it should be organised, another issue of debate in contemporary Colombo.

Much charity in Colombo is *informal*, a matter of individual giving directly to the poor who, for example, congregate around shrines, temples, churches and mosques. Gifts of money or food to poor people begging on the doorstep or to poor relations are the most frequent forms of charity. However, religious organisations have made attempts to manage the distribution of charity in order to ensure that it goes to ‘deserving causes’ rather than being given as a *whim* by individual donors motivated by self-interest or status considerations. Efforts to manage charitable actions are most evident in the Catholic community, not surprising given the hierarchical organization of the Church. Individuals are discouraged from giving to the poor outside churches and, instead, encouraged to channel their charity through parish-based organisations run by members of the laity. There are also profession-based organisations, for example, associations of Catholic lawyers and Catholic teachers, which attempt to manage the charitable process. Muslims are equally concerned about relationships between individuals and giving. Whilst some small Muslim communities – namely the Bohras and Memons – have developed a tradition of *pooling* charitable donations for projects to help community members, *zakat* committees have also begun to spring up amongst the mainstream Sunni majority. These are often informal groups of people connected through friendship, university education, profession or business who collect *zakat* and *sadaqa* for specific purposes - for example, the provision of educational scholarships, basic housing and sanitation, and the support of (rural) employment schemes. The tsunami emergency was a catalyst for the emergence of more organized forms of charitable giving; but also evident is the influence of various strands of Islamic reformism whose orientation is more engaged and *systematic* forms of charity, given in the name of piety, community strengthening, and development. Supporters of various reformist organizations argued that ‘a poor Muslim cannot be a poor Muslim’, and were hopeful that with more co-ordination and planning *zakat* and *sadaqa* would lift all Sri Lankan Muslims out of poverty. More generally, for reformist Muslims the intended outcome organized forms of charity is eliciting specific moral dispositions of both givers and receivers to ensure that charitable activity works towards reinforcing and supporting community and religious life.

In contrast to the *ordering* of Catholic and Muslim charity, is Buddhist and Hindu philanthropy. Large charitable organisations exist, for example the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress and the All Ceylon Hindu Congress – and their respective Young Men’s and Young Women’s Associations – which use funds collected locally for charitable endeavours; principally running orphanages and elders’ homes, scholarship programmes, and projects designed to improve quality of life in their communities. These are modelled on Christian organisations and came into existence in the late nineteenth century, in direct response to the perceived threat of Christian proselytization that took place on the back of colonial expansion (a threat which continues to motivate some Buddhist charitable giving today). The majority of Buddhist charities in Colombo are dependent on overseas, often non-Buddhist, donors. For example, the Foundation of Goodness raises funds principally from the international cricketing fraternity whilst until recently, Sarvodaya’s largest donors were Jewish synagogues in the US and the UK. Overseas Buddhist organisations have also sponsored temple-based foundations, such as the Mahabodi Society, which runs small community development and education projects, and post-tsunami organisations, like SUCCESS and Red Lotus (the latter established as a Buddhist response to Red Cross and Red Crescent). It is increasingly clear that the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora are channelling funds through local ‘social service’ organisations, in order to promote a nationalist agenda. Buddhist giving tends not to be framed by institutional framework, but, instead, directed by the practice of *daane*. As a result, there is debate about whether temples are *more* deserving than orphanages or elders’ homes, or an *ad hoc* desire to help the poor, sick, and needy.

Currently charitable giving is undergoing a transformation. The increased influence of small numbers of vociferous extremist Sinhala-Buddhists organizations has made Christian and Muslim minorities sensitive to criticism of their economic success and their particularistic orientation. As we have seen, much charitable activity in Colombo takes place within the ambit of individual religious traditions, enabling Catholics to benefit from Catholic donors, Buddhists from Buddhist donors, and Muslims from Muslim donors, and so on. This *in-group* charitable orientation is most obvious when, as the result of donation, religious buildings are constructed. But it is also clear that *individual* acts of charity tend to link givers and recipients within the same community. This has led to accusations that certain groups (most notably Christians and Muslims) have gained unfair advantage over the Buddhist majority by virtue of their ability to mobilize economic resources for the benefit of their

communities as a whole through charity and philanthropy.

There is a continuing tension between particularistic and universalistic approaches to charity and a continual questioning as to whether charity should be aimed at ‘our own’ or a broader humanitarian constituency. How far broader humanitarian goals are adopted often appears to depend on the degree to which local organisations are dependent on, or linked to, external agencies and their particular practices and agendas.

With regard to the Christian groups, the tendency to focus on humanity - or the poor undifferentiated by religious affiliation - is perhaps most evident amongst long established Protestant (not evangelical) groups. This, in part, can be seen as a reaction to the way Western missionaries used charity as a means for encouraging conversion. But it is also a reaction to the strong links between Sri Lankan Protestant organisations and their secular Western partners. Similarly, although Caritas, the global Catholic development charity, is primarily funded by organisations close to the Catholic Church, it is also moving towards a less particularistic focus - in part because of its reliance on funds from external agencies (both religious and secular) and its need to present itself as ‘Sri Lankan’ rather than *narrowly* Catholic. The situation is more complex amongst Muslims, in that *zakat must* be given by Muslims to Muslims, and there is donor concern about the ‘real’ identity of doorstep beggars. Rumours are rife that there are *professional* beggars trying to pass themselves off as Muslims in order to receive *zakat* during *ramzan*. The same restrictions do not apply for *sadaqa*, and we have found a number of foundations associated to prominent Muslim businessmen which extend their charitable activities to anyone in need, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation⁴. In practice, though, charity follows specific geographical trajectories, whereby donations in kind or cash tend to move from Colombo to the donors’ natal or ancestral villages, reproducing particularism and long-term patronage relationships.

There is resistance to discourses seeking to promote more ‘modern’ or engaged forms of charity. Firstly, there is an obvious class dimension to giving, evidenced by middle class concern about beggars – who are seen as a nuisance, bothering *respectable* households with

⁴ For example, providing shelter and education to tsunami orphans; running medical camps for war refugees; and (in one case) channelling *sadaqa* through a corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme operating medical clinics across Colombo.

incessant demands and giving communities a bad name. Survey respondents argued that giving to beggars increases their dependency and does not foster long-term solutions to poverty. The view was that the poor should be ‘helped to help themselves’ through *systematic* intervention and support aimed at changing cultural orientation, as much as improving economic conditions. This neo-liberal penchant for *fostering* an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the urban and rural poor has particular purchase amongst young professionals and educated businessmen – although it finds little favour amongst bazaar traders and shopkeepers, for whom giving to beggars (often on a daily basis) is seen as means to further one’s luck and success in business. Whilst the our respondents agree that co-ordinated and organised charity is more effective, many feel a commitment to supporting individuals or families with whom they have long-term personal relations. The boundary between charitable giving and patronage is porous, and, as one Muslim bazaar trader put it, “I just don’t like someone else giving away my money!”.

Finally, ‘what to give’ remains an unresolved question, especially for Muslims. For some Muslims the main focus is the *act* of giving itself - either the fulfilment of a religious obligation (*zakat*) or a merit-filled pious act (*sadaqa*), which concerns only the giver. Cash, in this case, is deemed to be the most appropriate form of donation. For others, however, givers should be concerned with the *transformation* of the lives of those who receive charity, and, thus, donations should address specific needs – for example, providing appropriate sanitation or building low-cost housing. In practice, however, donors are seldom fixed on one form of giving alone, preferring instead to spread their donations. The most common practice is to continue responding to demands from individuals – not only beggars, but also those unable to meet the expense of medical emergencies, life-cycle rituals, education, and utilities bills – and to support religious institutions, whilst giving a proportion of one’s donations to various religious and non-religious charitable organisations.

Charity and other forms of giving

We have argued that the motive for giving is most frequently presented in terms of piety: part of being a good Catholic, Buddhist, or Muslim. The act of giving is not simply a reflection of specific moral and religious concerns, but also it helps constitute *people* as ethical subjects. More generally, though, motivations are subtle, multiple and often

overlapping. There is evidence that in the past the big philanthropic donors – who established schools, hospitals and orphanages, and gave substantial amounts of money to religious institutions – were in part engaged in a process of ‘purification of their wealth, with an eye on acquiring merits in this life and the afterlife. Contemporary successful entrepreneurs couch their charity in terms of CSR and see no great divide between their productive activities and those concerned with redistribution of wealth; both are governed by a common morality, or at least *linked moralities* (see later). Current debates concerning the anonymity of charity notwithstanding, we should *not* assume that altruism and self-interested instrumentality are necessarily at odds. Charitable giving is often conceived as producing immediate material benefits, as much as spiritual rewards.

However ideas of religious merit might articulate with other considerations when it comes to for charitable giving. Charity is often couched in kinship obligation – the aim being to help one’s poor or less fortunate relations and, by extension also one’s clients and employees - or in terms of an inchoate feeling that the poor should be assisted. There are also issues of identity and community formation at stake. Membership of charitable organisations offers access to social networks and the various social benefits generated by these networks. Thus, in the Catholic world participation in young peoples’ groups (for example, for young lawyers and doctors) creates the opportunity to meet others outside the individual’s immediate circle. Many formal or informal charitable organisations have grown up around these professional friendships, and of course Rotarian Clubs and Lions Clubs are as much about networking and friendship as they are about assisting the poor and needy. And, as mentioned earlier, charitable giving supports projects of community building and strengthening. In this sense what charitable actions encourage are the creation of shared identities and shared values - which are only partly the result of the charitable acts themselves.

Our research also found that the motivations and intentions of those who make charitable donations might not be shared by those who receive them. For some, being a recipient is in effect a means to securing a livelihood, precarious as it might be. Time and again the same beggars are found outside the major shrines/churches/temples/mosques, or entering shops on the same day each week. In some areas there are organisations which ensure some equity of access to the best pitches. Without doubt, the best charity as far as the recipients are

concerned is that which is given without conditions, and, of course, money is preferred over donations in kind. What is resented most are attempts by the giver to impose particular moral rules, as a condition of the donation. Some distinction has to be made between the recipients of small-time charity and those who receive greater largesse. For instance, those who receive educational assistance or housing appear to be more positive about the moral demands of the donors than are wayside beggars or those who receive specific handouts during the ceremonies of the various religious groups. Moreover, donations that the givers categorize as acts of charity may be seen by the recipients as the fulfilment of obligations towards clients or kin that the latter have the prerogative to expect and demand. Whether the giver is moved by humanitarian concerns, religious piety, economic self-interest, political calculation or a combination of these, makes little difference to recipients who have to rely on the help of others to make ends meet and to deal with unpredictable emergencies.

So far we have stressed the religious and relational orientations of charity in Colombo, reflecting the dominant discourse in the field. Yet it has to be remembered that there is also a long history of a more ‘secular’ attitude towards charity. This goes back to the 19th century establishment of friendly societies, organisations orientated towards assisting ‘fallen women’, the Eye Donation Society, and international organisations such as the Red Cross. More recently there has been a growth in the number of ‘trusts’, often established by politicians who claim to support the poor and the marginal, but also use them to reward their political followers. Grants to students or donations to support a local school or hospital might secure the loyalty of potential voters in a particular locality. Once more, the boundary is blurred between charity as a humanitarian activity and using charitable acts as an instrumental means of creating loyalties, dependencies and patronage.

Self-interest and benevolence are even more intricately intertwined in the field of corporate social responsibility, evidenced - amongst other things – by the interesting interaction between religious ideals and the logic of contemporary ‘philanthrocapitalism (for a critique of philanthrocapitalism see chapter two by Edwards). Formal CSR projects are run by large Sri Lankan and Colombo-based international companies such as HSBC, Unilever, Ceylon Tobacco, (owned by British American Tobacco), and Dialog. International companies design local programmes under the auspices of parent company global sustainability aims, but at

times, when applied in the local Sri Lankan context, the objective is not entirely clear. For example, Unilever - which is globally committed to improving personal hygiene - promotes hand washing and teeth brushing; and Ceylon Tobacco, in line with BAT's global efforts, focuses on agrarian development - helping to train farmers in agricultural and business skills. Whilst the orientation, organisation and rhetoric of these companies are reflective of global discourses on CSR and sustainability, in practice corporate giving often does not move beyond a trite 'schoolbooks and bicycles' approach. Although Sri Lankan companies do also stress strategic value and sustainability, they use less of the globalised language of CSR - preferring instead a more emotive language of care for the well-being of fellow Sri Lankans. These initiatives are much more engaged in education and health, and, in some cases, they are closely connected to the government – with interventions designed to rehabilitate post-conflict areas.

An especially important feature of Sri Lankan private sector philanthropy is the political context within which it operates. In the post-conflict environment⁵, an increasingly combative Sinhala Buddhist nationalism (Ali 2013) and the growth of anti-Muslim sentiment has made doing business in Colombo potentially dangerous, especially for the Muslims who own some of Sri Lanka's largest companies. It seems that private companies and public limited companies (PLCs) are responding to this by engaging in different forms of philanthrocapitalism, through processes that might be better understood as 'philanthronationalism' (Widger 2013). Our study identified four kinds of approaches to CSR projects, defined as:

- (1) 'collaborative' - where projects are conducted in *direct* partnership with government agencies, including the Army, and seek to engender specific nationalist functions and goals
- (2) 'reactive' - where projects are launched with the intention of relieving specific nationalist threats
- (3) 'assimilative' - where projects display overtly nationalist commitments in the face of

⁵ The war between Tamil separatists and the Sri Lankan state is generally considered to have begun around 1983 and finally ended with the defeat of the separatist LTTE in 2009. The conflict led to widespread destruction of property and infrastructure plus large scale issues concerning a displaced population and resettlement issues for a discussion of the unfolding of the conflict, see eg Spencer 1990; Woost and Winslow 2004; Thiranagama 2011). These are presently being addressed by various state and non-state parties although there is widespread disagreement as to the effectiveness and motivations underlying elements of the relief effort.

anti-nationalist/anti-patriotic suspicion, and so attempt to appease nationalist fears

- (4) ‘passive’ - where projects pay *lip service* to nationalist sentiments, with no explicit nationalist objectives

It is in the charitable activities of major Sri Lankan companies and PLCs that the global language and tools of CSR are more fully hybridised, tailored to accommodate local concepts and practices of charity and philanthropy. LankaComm, for instance, is a group of companies that, amongst other activities, produces and imports herbal pharmaceuticals and medical products to the island. Its CSR programme *CommClinic* focuses on the provision of free outpatient healthcare and cheap medicines on a social enterprise model in five Colombo slums. The aim is to make health charity sustainable: too often charities run health camps but don’t provide any follow up. To date CommClinic has treated more than 50,000 patients. The success of the project lies in its apparent ability to appeal to poorer patients’ desires to experience what they see as the convenience and customer-orientated characteristic of the private sector at an affordable price. The LankaComm case also underscores the complex layering of indigenous CSR programmes. Thus the LankaComm chairman explains that the project helps him to discharge his desire - as a Muslim - to give *sadaqa* and so gain religious merits. For the CSR team, the project fits the wider philanthrocapitalist ‘win-win’ model of social enterprise, which has produced a remarkably successful programme worthy of global advertisement. For the paid clinic staff, the project is viewed as a social service for the poor, and one that is more socially and morally engaged than regular healthcare. For patients, the clinics are variously understood as a way of getting healthcare akin to that provided by private facilities, or, alternatively, as a second choice to private facilities. However, it was clear that for those living under the poverty line, the only option was still the wholly free government service - as even *CommClinic*’s subsidised medicines were too expensive.

Conclusions

Historical literature on charity indicates that its nature changes over time. Charity in 16th century Europe is very different from philanthropy in the 19th or 20th centuries as discussed by Cunningham in Chapter 1. In crude terms, the shift is from an ‘organic’ concept of the social - in which those deemed to be members of society have rights - to a context in which humanity and the individual become the *key values* (Fassin 2012). In Europe, scholars have

linked the shift from medieval and early modern charity, to nineteenth and twentieth century humanitarian philanthropy, to the transformation of the *bourgeois self* (Haskell, 1985; McCloskey, 1998; Adam, 2004; Baader, 2004; Lassig, 2004; Cunningham, 1998, Jones, 1969; Mollat, 1986; Owen, 1965). The histories of Jewish charities in Germany and the United States stress ways in which they lost their specific *Jewish nature* and became increasingly concerned with bourgeois values and interests (Baader, 2004; Lassig, 2004). But these processes of change have taken place at different speeds and not always according to predictable teleology. So bourgeois philanthropy has co-existed with other forms of philanthropy where socially embedded practices have prevailed - a model of personalised patronage distinct from the alleged universalistic tendency of the bourgeoisie. Comparable processes have been noted in colonial and post-colonial South Asia, where colonial modernity changed the conceptualisation of both charity and the nature of both givers and receivers (Haynes, 1987, White, 1991, Sharma, 2001, Joshi, 2001, Palsetia, 2005, Birla, 2009). In Sri Lanka, however, the complexities have been even greater than in Europe and North America. Different models of philanthropy and charity - associated with different imaginings of the social - forming complex relationships – mean that in the Colombo context ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ forms of philanthropic activity might not simply co-exist (Haynes, 1987) but rather *interact* and work ‘through each other’ (Copeman, 2009: 4). Our research suggests that whilst we can ask questions about the motivation behind charitable acts, we also have to recognise the complexities of the context in which the giving takes place. As we have indicated, similar acts have very different significance in different contexts, and the same act of charity can be understood very differently - depending upon the social positioning of the givers and receivers (Bourdieu, 2000; Osella & Osella, 1996).

Frequently, philanthropic and charitable acts are seen as being opposed to self-interested economic activities (see eg. Mauss 1925). This has created problems for mainstream economic theorists who analysed philanthropic activities on the grounds that altruism has fits uneasily with main-stream economic thinking (Buchanan, 1975, Sugden, 1982, 1984; Bag, 2008). Whilst not directly addressing issues of charity and philanthropy, the work of various economic sociologists suggests how deeply embedded in moral and ethical principles is the world of contemporary capitalism (Fourcade, 2007; Fourcade and Healey, 2007; Mitchell, 1998, 2005; Callon, 1998a, 1998b). At the same time, research has underscored that the market and its ideology might be closely imbricated with religiosity and religious practice

(Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000; Osella and Osella, 2009; Rudnyckyj, 2010; Feillard, 2004; Haenni, 2005; cf Marshall, 2009). Our data on charitable and philanthropic practices in Colombo suggests a research agenda focused on understanding *how* the complex, fragmentary and - at times - contradictory elements of diverse moral economies relate to one another. This represents a shift towards focus on the everyday working of economies of morality.

Religion appears to play an important role in various forms of giving, although in different modalities. For instance, Lassig (2004) writes of the nineteenth century German *nouveau riche* as having to ‘cleanse themselves of the “stink” of new money’ (cf Hirschman 1977). Many writers link the motives for charitable giving to the demands of particular religious traditions. There is an extensive literature examining the role of Christian charity in the search for salvation (Rosenthal, 1972; Henderson, 1987; Psotles, 2001; Boyd, 2002; Nichols, 2007). This can be paralleled with literature examining the role of charity in other religious traditions, for instance the philanthropic activities of Sir Moses Montefiore (a Jewish English financier and banker; see Green, 2005), and Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (an Indian Parsi merchant; see Palsetia, 2005). There is perhaps less literature on Muslim and Buddhist practices. The transformative nature of charitable and voluntary actions is quite clear: making saints out of sinners; absolving the giver of the taint of evil; transcending the material world (Ziliak, 2004); or, more generally, creating pious subjects. But this transformative effect is not limited to the world of the *religious* giver. The literature on more secular philanthropists, for example, biographies of Rockefeller and Carnegie - not to mention the hagiographical literature on the new philanthropists (Handy, 2007) - is also replete with references to the transformative power of giving. The transformative impulse is not limited to the giver; what philanthropy aims to do, in many cases, is also transform the receiver. This is a major theme in nineteenth century British philanthropy, which stresses the ‘deserving poor’; the potentially transforming impact of giving; and the danger that this might *not* lead to changes for recipients (Himmelfarb, 1992, 1995).

The same theme runs through much of contemporary development philanthropy - the dream being that acts of charitable giving (including volunteering) will change not only the material but also the moral and spiritual nature of the recipients (Bell, 2000; Stirrat, 2008). The data

we have presented suggests a *bigger* shift - across different religious traditions - towards more engaged attention to the transformative role of charitable giving. This leads to debates concerning definitions of the *deserving* objects of intervention and what it takes to achieve their *upliftment*. These changes are produced through circulation of ideas within and between religious traditions, as well as through a *dialogue* with the orientations and practices of international development organisations⁶. Accountability, sustainability, empowerment and participation have become currency in the language of both formal and informal local charitable organisations - just as the global discourse of corporate social responsibility has penetrated the private sector. We have argued that these novel orientations – which give rise to hybrid forms of charity - might be resisted or re-signified by donors and receivers alike.

This leaves us with our last point, the vexed question of the relationship between charity, philanthropy and development. Our data identified the fragmentation of charitable practices in Colombo - a complex universe of individual givers, trusts, foundations, and formal and informal groups/organisations operating oblivious of each other. Lack of transparency and trust, political ambition, competition for status, and patronage are some of the shortcomings of an otherwise extensive network of charity. To that must be added the problems of replication and over-supply, whereby health and education programmes overshadow any other charitable intervention. The endless drawbacks marring local forms of charity and philanthropy lends support to those respondents in Colombo who *tirelessly* argue that charity can become a means for development only when it is anonymous, organised, planned, co-ordinated, and administered efficiently. Different conceptions of what development means notwithstanding, what is missing in these arguments is that much of charitable giving in Colombo, and Sri Lanka more generally, whilst not concerned with engendering *lasting* transformation of the economic and moral practices of receivers, does potentially provide forms of everyday social protection. Access to monetary help in emergencies, or the certainty of receiving gifts and handouts on religious festivals or for life-cycle rituals, provide a lifeline for those whose livelihoods are, at best, precarious. Organised and co-ordinated charity might lift people out of poverty, something that cannot be achieved through informal giving, but perhaps it is oblivious to the everyday predicaments and compelling needs of the most vulnerable and marginal who rely on regular charity from individual donors. Finally,

⁶ The presence on the island of international development organisations increased substantially since the 2004 tsunami, but has begun to wane since Sri Lanka achieved ‘middle income status’ in 2010.

the emergence and increased importance of *middle-men*, or *gate-keepers*, (for example, parish priests, imams, school teachers, development workers, and social activists) - who mediate and enable access to organised forms of charity and philanthropy - suggests that the politics of giving can never be dissociated from the production and reproduction of social hierarchies and power relations.

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